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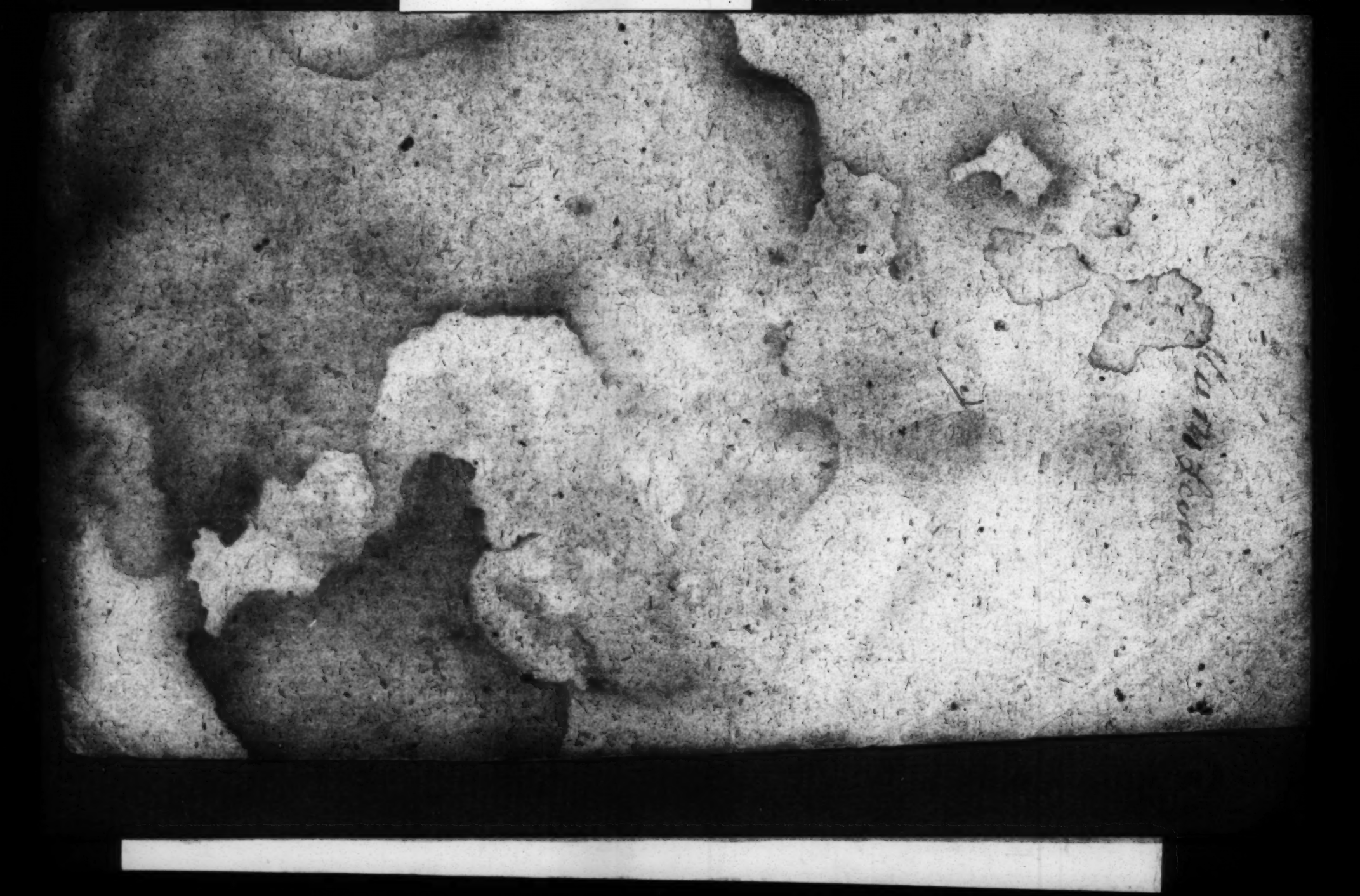

The Danger of Taking God's Name | in | Vain. | As it was Delivered in a | Sermon | — | By Samuel Willard, Teacher of a Church | in Boston: | — | [Three lines from Mal. i. 14; and three lines from Levit. xix. 12.] | — || Boston, Printed by Benjamin Harris, and | John Allen, at the London-Coffee-House: | 1691. 16mo, pp. (1), 30.

Titlepage, *verso* blank; 1–30, text, "The Danger of Taking God's Name | in | Vain. | [Four lines from Deut. v. 11.], headpiece two lines of border pieces, "Finis" at foot of the page.

(Prov. 20. XVII. 18.)

The Danger of Taking God's Name IN VAIN.

As it was Delivered in a

SERMON

By *Samuel Willard*, Teacher of a Church in *BOSTON*.

Mal. 1. 14. *I am a great King, saith the Lord of Hosts, and my Name is Dreadful among the Heathen.*

Levit. 19. 12. *Ye shall not swear by my Name falsly, neither shalt thou Prophane the Name of thy God, I am the* LORD.

BOSTON, Printed by *Benjamin Harris*, and *John Allen*, at the *London-Coffee-House*, 1691.

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book By samuell willard

teacher of the church in

Boston stand in awe of the

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Caleb Jewett

His Book

The Danger of Taking God's Name

IN

VAIN.

Deut. 5. 11. *Thou ſhalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs, that taketh his Name in vain.*

IT is worthy of obſervation, that God in Delivering the Moral Law, which is ſummed up in the Decalogue, or ſen Commandemnts, giveth eight of theſe Commands, *Negatively*, and but two *Affirmatively*, therein Firſtly and more directly pointing at the Sins whereby the precept is in danger of being Violated; and herein he hath Accommodated himſelf to the Infirmity of Fallen Man, who may eaſier come to underſtand what he ſhould not than what he ſhould do: this alſo diſcovers the proneneſs there is in our hearts to hurry

into Sin so that we stand in need of a prohibition with a Commination, as a Thorn-Hedge, to keep us within Compass, and let us know, that one great end of the Law, with respect to Fallen Man, is to be a Bridle to curb him in from his Exorbitancies; and withal signifies, that it is no little part of the work of Ministry, to Preach against Sin.

It is *Davids* observation, Psal. 119. 96. *I have seen an end of all Perfection, but thy Command is exceeding broad.* These *ten words* would make *ten Volumns*, if they were drawn out at length; each of them partakes in this quality, having a very great depth and fulness in it, as by the Rules given for expounding of the Commandments, will easily be Evinced.

There is in every Command something that is expresly declared, and a great many more things that are necessarily included. This Rule is applicable to the *third Command*, which is the Subject of our present Consideration, as much as to any of the rest. The Command is given *Negatively*, and therefore speaks directly of a sin that is prohibited in it; though there are also many sins contained under the prohibition; but my present business is only to speak of that which the words do in terms express.

Here then two things are to be observed.

1. The

1. The ſin which is prohibited, and that is, *Taking the Name of God in vain.* The word Tranſlated, *Take*, firſtly ſignifies, to lift up a thing, and it nextly aims at the *words* of men, the taking up of Gods Name into their mouths; although it alſo extends to thoughts and deeds; but it is the former that I am at preſent to take notice of. *The name of God* is of great extent, for it includes in it, every thing of God, in which he hath made any diſcovery of himſelf to the Creature: but more expreſly it intends, any word by which the Great God is underſtood, whether *Eſſentially* or *Perſonally*; and ſo, every one of his *Attributes*, which are ſo many Letters in which he hath written his Name unto us, are here to be conſidered. The word, *In vain*; is ſometimes uſed *Subſtantively*, and then it ſignifies *Temerity* & *falſeneſs*: ſometimes it is uſed *Adverbially*, and there it imports as much as, *lightly, unneceſſarily, unprofitably.*

2. The danger in committing of this ſin is diſcovered, in a ſevere Commination. *For the Lord will not hold him guiltleſs*, &c.

The word that is tranſlated, *To hold guiltleſs*, ſignifies in the firſt Conjugation, to be *pure, free, void*; and in the Conjugation here uſed, it imports the treating of one as ſo; It therefore aims at *Innocency* in the Perſon,

perſon, and *Impunity* the Conſequent upon it. And there is a *Meioſis* or *Liptote* in the expreſſion; it is. q. d. he will certainly hold him a guilty perſon, and deal with him as ſuch an one: ſuch manner of expreſſions are uſed in the Scriptures, and contain a very awfull threatning in them:

Hence,

DOCTRINE:

It is a fearful ſin for any vainly to take Gods Name into their mouths; and Expoſeth them that ſo do, to Tremendous Judgments,

Though this be not all, yet it is one thing plainly pointed at in this command and than which I ſcarcely know any thing that calls for a more ſolemn and ſevere Teſtimony to be born againſt it; it being a ſin that is not only practiſed by the openly profane ſort of men, but is alſo too lamentably allowed in themſelves by many that make an open profeſſion of God and his fear, as will be more than manifeſt when we have conſidered the nature of this ſin diſtinctly. There are therefore two things here to be enquired into

1. How or wherein men do incur the guilt of this ſin? 2. What diſcovery may be made

of the grievousness or fearfulness of it?

1. How or wherein men do incurr the guilt this sin?

A. A Thing is then truly said to be done *vainly*, when it is to no good end or purpose; when there is no benefit or advantage that accrues to men by the doing of it; they neither profit themselves nor others: and consequently it is much more so, when it proves pernicious, and turns to a great deal of damage; Gods people are not to abstain from taking of his name into their mouths, but contrarily, they are to be often *making mention* of it; but they then do it *vainly*, when they do it after any other manner then is becoming. Now the ways by which men may bring themselves under the guilt of this sin, may be referred to two Heads: It is commited, either in their ordinary communication, or in and about Swearing.

1. In their *Ordinary Communication* or discourse: and there are many respects in which men may be charged justly for taking the name of God vainly into their mouths on this account; I shall instance in some of them.

1. By mentioning the Name of God without *Reverend Thoughts* of him: when men use this Name as a word of course, and have not togeather with it the aw of his Majesty

upon

upon their hearts, but they ſpeak of him without conſidering who he is whom they are ſpeaking of: we ſhould never think or ſpeak of him, without due reverence of him all they therefore that do not Honour and reverence Him in their hearts, mention his name in vain; *Mal.* 1. 6. *Pſal.* 50. 16. 17. and thus muſt every unregenerate man needs do, becauſe he is without this Reverence; ungodly men have not on them the aw of God; impoſſible it is therefore for them not to break this Command, if ever they ſpeak of God.

2. By uſing of his name in any ſuddain and raſh *Exclamations.* If the former be a Sin againſt this Precept, this then muſt needs be ſo, for it is a proper fruit and reſult of it: *Raſhneſs & Reverence* cannot well be ſuppoſed to be conſiſtent one with the other; for Reverence will ſurely make men to deliberate, and to think before they will adventure to ſpeak. There are ſome, who upon every ſudden vexation that is given them, or diſtreſs that comes upon them, will cry out, *Oh Lord! Oh God!* there are others that if any thing frighten them, or ſome unexpected trouble comes upon them at unawares, will earneſtly ſay, *Lord bleſs me, what ſhall I do?* we have little reaſon to believe them, if they ſhould tell us, that theſe are *Ejaculatory*

Prayers

Prayers to God, when as the Speakers neither know, nor have time to conſider what they ſay; nor are they for the preſent in any compoſed praying ſtame; no, it is a real *taking of Gods name in vain.* The *Jewiſh interpreters* underſtand that in *Levit.* 24. 11. *the Iſraelitiſh womans ſon blaſphemed the name of the Lord.* of his expreſly mentioning the Name *Jehovah*, in a raſh and irreverend manner.

3. By ſpeaking *blaſphemouſly* or *reproachfully* of God. The word which is uſed by the Hebrews for *Blaſpheming*, ſignifieth to *Pierce* or bore through a thing, and the evill tongue is compared to a *ſharp and two-edged ſword?* when men ſpeak of God with any reflection upon him, or upon any of his Attributes, they do, as it were, ſtab his name thorough with this ſword: *Reproaching* and *Blaſpheming* are put together as Synonymical or Exegetical; 2 *Kings* 19. 22. any thing that is either ſaid of him, or aſcribed unto him, which is unbecoming of his Glory, is a *Taking of his Name in vain*; this they did egregiouſly, when they ſaid, *Ezek.* 8. 12. *The Lord ſeeth us; the Lord hath forſaken the earth*; and hitherto belong all thoſe frettings, repinings and murmurings, complaints which men do at any time make againſt the Providence of God, when it goes croſs to their inclinati-

on: when they do charge him foolishly.

4. By professing and maintaining of any *False Doctrine*. Doctrines in Religion are nothing else but so many Predications of the Name of God. He is the Author of Religion, he also is the object of it, for it points to him as its ultimate end: The Profession of it is in Scripture called the *Confessing of his Name*; whatsoever Opinion therefore that men will maintain, and stand up in the defence of, which is unbecoming of God, and contrary to what is revealed of his mind in the Holy Scriptures, is a reflection upon him, and putting of his *Name* to the authorizing of a falsehood, and that must needs be to use it in *vain*; this is therefore called *vain praying*, or *jangling*, 1 *Tim.* 1. 6. and because it so nearly concerneth God, the vanity of it must need reflect upon his Name.

5. By *Imprecations* or Cursings; either of themselves, or others; either Positively, or Conditionally; and that whether Gods Name be expressly mentioned, or only implied in them: for because the accomplishing of such things as are Imprecated belongs to his Providence necessarily; hence he is really invoked in all such Execrations: There are indeed *Prophetical Imprecations*, and those Personal, Recorded in the Word of God; but *they are not* to be drawn down into a president,

except

except we were extraordinarily Inſpired, as they were who uttered them; and indeed, they are but a Rhetorical denunciation of Gods Judgments, by inſpiration; and oftentimes againſt ſuch for whom they did mean while pray. There are alſo general Imprecations againſt Gods, and his people implacable enemies, which are exemplary; ſuch as that, *Judg* 5. 31 *ſo let all thine Enemies periſh Oh Lord!* But there are thoſe that are profane: and ſuch is a mans *curſing of himſelf*; though it be *Hypothetically*; as when men wiſh that *they may dye upon the ſpot*, or that *they may never ſpeak a word more*, or any other thing of like nature, if ſuch a thing which they ſay be not true, or if they do not do this or that: hitherto belong *Jobs* and *Jeremiah*'s curſing of their day, which was a diſcovery of the remainders and prevalency at that time of corruption in them; for men to confirm any thing they ſay with ſuch Imprecations, is more than *yea* and *nay*, which our Saviour Chriſt tells us is enough, & aſſures us that *any thing more is ſin*, *Mat.* 5. 37. there is alſo a prophane Imprecation upon others too much in practice, and that horrid one, ſo frequent in the mouths of ſome, *Damme you*, where the Name of God is intended, though ſuppreſſed, who alone hath the power of *Damnation*, or whatever other

miſchief is wiſhed to men: it is contrary to Scripture Precept, which hath commanded us, ſaying, *Bleſs and Curſe not*, Rom. 12. 14.

6. By the uſing of Gods Name in *Charms*. God would have no *Charmer* to be ſuffered amongſt his people, *Deut.* 18. 11. The name comes of a word that ſignifies, to *Conſociate*; and the reaſon of it is, becauſe ſuch perſons have real *ſociety* with the *Devil*; who, that he may cheat men into familiarity with him, *transforms himſelf into an Angel of light*: and hath to that end, taught men to uſe the name of *God*, or of *Chriſt*, or ſome notable Sentence that is recorded in Gods Word, (which is alſo his Name) either for the *keeping of Devils out of places*, or for the *Curing of theſe or thoſe Maladies* that men labour of, which is indeed nothing elſe but plain conjuration, and an horrible abuſing of the Name of God to ſuch purpoſes as ſerve egregiouſly to the Eſtabliſhing of the Devils Kingdom in the hearts of men.

7. By aſcribing any of the *Divine Properties* to the Creature. This ſort of Blaſphemy is grown into a common complement with ſome men in the world, whilſt in their Adulatory Commendations of thoſe with whom they would flatter themſelves into Reputation, they either aſcribe unto them the *Incommunicable Perfections* of God, or thoſe which

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are *Communicable*, in the *Abſtract*, which ſo belong only to him; and cannot without his reproach be aſcribed to the Creature more than in the *Concrete*: and men addicted to inſinuate, are too eaſily bent to exceſs upon this account, if they be not very heedful to their words: In a word, when either God is levelled with the Creatures, or the Creature is made equal unto God, his Name is taken in vain: this was their ſin, who to flatter a proud Prince, put that Encomium upon his ſpecious Oration, Act. 12. 22. *The voice of a God, and not of a man.*

8. By making of *prophane Jeſts* out of the Scripture. Gods Name is put upon his Written Word; and it is greatly concerned in it, for which cauſe he is to be Reverenced in all our mention which at any time we make of it, his Name therefore muſt needs be vilify'd by all ſuch as turn it into *ſcurrility*, as all they do, that make ſport therewithal: when men uſe their wits in a facetious Citation of the Scripture, or any portion of it, to make themſelves or others merry, this is to be wittily wicked; it is to degrade the Word of God from the noble end that it was written for, which is to *make men wiſe unto Salvation*, to a vile and baſe employment, for the ſupplying of profaneneſs. Thus theſe Jews of old abuſed that awful

Scripture-

Scripture-Expreſſion, *The burden of the Lord*; with which God had been wont to preface Prophetical Comminations of Judgments; and they in contempt would merrily aſk of the Prophet, *What is the burden of the Lord?* for which he ſorely threatens them with Deſtruction, Jer. 23. 33, 34.

9. By *Railing* at *Godlineſs* in Gods People. Gods Name is put upon his people, and it in nothing is more evidently to be read, than in their holy walking in conformity to his Revealed Will. The Holineſs of the Saints, is the Image or Repreſentation of Gods Holineſs which is to be ſeen upon them: and when this becomes a reproach unto them, & men can flout and jeer them for it, and make it to be the very matter of their taunting and reviling of them, herein there is great opprobry reflected upon Gods Holy Name; The Pſalmiſt therefore in his complaint unto God, intereſted him in them, *Pſal.* 69. 9. *The Reproaches of them that have reproached thee, are fallen upon me*; and what was that for, but his Religious performances,? *ver.* 10, 11.

2. In and about *Swearing*; An oath is properly a *Solemn Invocation of God*, and Appeal unto him, to be a Witneſs of the truth of of what we ſay: in it therefore, we ſubmit our ſelves to his Righteous Revenges if we do not Swear the Truth; it is therefore al-

ways

ways taken either *explicitly* or *implicitly* in his Name; that therefore muſt needs be peculiarly concerned in it; here then this ſin is ſo much the more notorious, by how much the more there is of Solemnity in the thing: and men may become guilty of this prophanation, in two reſpects; *viz.* Either in giving or in making of an Oath.

1. In the *Giving* or Adminiſtring of an Oath, thoſe who do Adminiſter it unto others, do make mention of the *Great and Dreadful Name of God*; and they may then be ſaid to do it vainly.

1. When there is no *need* of or *occaſion* for it. To call men forth to Swear, to allow them, much more to compel them, in every trivial matter, when the thing it ſelf is not worth it, or the caſe may be as well determined without it. This doubtleſs is not left at the pleaſure of every vain perſon, who hath no regard to the Glory of God, nor conſiders the danger of prophaning his Name, but is to be regulated by the diſcretion of thoſe who are empowered to give it, and the blame will neceſſarily fall upon them, if there be any male-adminiſtration in this regard: and without any doubt, that which is it ſelf *Solemne*, requires a *Solemne occaſion* to put it in practice.

2. Where Oaths are *multipled* more than needs

needs; the main design of an Oath is to put an end to a controversy by taking the highest step that men are capable of for finding out the truth of any matter which depends upon Humane Testimony for the clearing of it: but how often do men bring in a multitude of supernumerary and superfluous Witnesses in the management of their cause? a great many that are not to the purpose, and others more than is necessary; these cannot be admitted indiscriminately without Guilt: *Two or three Witnesses* are enough to one Article that is pertinent, and needs proof, ten then are too many; and one is more than enough to that circumstance, which is impertinent. And to this head may be annumerated, the admitting of *cross and contradictory Oaths*, when men Swear diametrically opposite one to another, so that it is most apparent that the one or the other must unavoidably come under the guilt of Perjury; if therefore there appear to be a just reason to give the Oath to the one of these Parties, it will consequently upon the same ground be rational to with-hold it from the other; both cannot be given without evident affront offered to the Name of God.

3. When it is given to *persons uncapable*: I mean such as are *Morally* so: an Oath is the Confirmation of something spoken by Testi-

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mony; in which Gods *truth* is called in to ratify it; that which ſtrengthens our Credit of a Teſtimony by reaſon of the addition of an Oath to it, is a preſumption that the man hath ſo much of the aw of God upon his Conſcience, that he would not dare to call him who knows the ſecrets of the heart, to be a witneſs to a Lye, leſt he ſhould pull down his vengeance upon him by ſo doing: where then it is notoriouſly evident that men have no regard to God, or Conſcience, or ſpeaking the Truth, how is it poſſible they ſhould gain any Credit to that they ſay, by Swearing to it? what reaſon then or equity can there be in it, that mens *goods, Names, Eſtates, Liberties*, yea and *Lives* ſhould be diſpoſed of by ſuch men? and to what purpoſe then can they be Sworn? It is then of great moment that the perſons be enquired after, their capacity well conſidered, and the Teſtimony which they offer throughly examined in order to the Swearing of them, leſt otherwiſe the Name of God be taken in vain.

2. In the *making* Oath in any caſe;

An Oath may be diſtributed into a *Promiſſory*, and an *Aſſertory*: either an *Obligation to do* ſomething, or an *Affirming* ſomething to have been done.

1. A *Promiſſory* Oath is made; either to God, and then it is called a *vow*, or to man, and is a ſolemn promiſe with an Appeal un-

to God. In both of theſe he is called in as a Witneſs to the Sincerity of our engaging, and real purpoſe of performing accordingly, and his name is taken in vain in this reſpect.

1. When it is done raſhly and without deliberation; the Wiſeman tells us that we ſhould *not haſtily utter any thing before God*, *Eccl.* 5. 2. *i. e.* as a Witneſs. This he applies to a Vow in particular, *verſe* 5. and gives a reaſon for it; becauſe *it is better not to Vow, than having ſo done, not to pay*; and it is a poor excuſe to ſay, *it was an error*; now all this is the probable iſſue of *precipitancy*: men do not premeditate, and afterwards they repent; *the moſt forward in promiſing, are not ſeldom the moſt backward in performing.*

2. When it is in things that are *unlawful*. If men have no *Phyſical* Power to fulfil it, becauſe they promiſe that which is not their own, or above their ability of procuring; or no *moral* power to do it, becauſe it is unlawful, as being forbidden by God; and it would be a ſin in them to keep promiſe: it is therefore an act of profaneneſs for men to Swear that they will do ſuch things: of this nature was *Jephtha's Vow*, which procured him ſo much trouble; ſuch alſo was *Herod's* promiſe which he ſware to his Daughter-in-law. And to this head we may ſubjoyn thoſe Oaths that are *minatory*, when men bind themſelves to do

ſome acts of revenge upon others; ſuch was *David's* againſt *Nabal* and his houſe; and ſuch was theirs who bandied againſt *Paul*, and *bonnd themſelves in an Oath and a Curſe, not to eat till they had ſlain him*, Act. 23. 12.

2. An *Aſſertory* Oath is that which is made for the confirmation of the Truth of ſome matter of fact which we affirm to have been done, and in this reſpect God's Name is taken in vain.

1. When the Aſſertion it ſelf is *falſe*: eſpecially if he that affirms and thus confirms it, knows that it is not true: So divers interpret the word, *Vain* in our Text; *viz. falſely*; and indeed it is an high affront that is put upon God, to affix his Name to a Ly, and that meerly for the gaining of mens Credit unto it, as if it were true; and muſt needs be very derogatory to his Truth, which is to him exceeding precious.

2. When he that Swears doth not *of himſelf* know the thing to be true, which he teſtifieth unto, he at leaſt ſwears *ignorantly*, and that is a great vanity, but it is pernicious too, becauſe his very ignorance of the thing tells him that he cannot Swear to it: here all *Knights of the Poſt* are condemned, who will for hire make *Affidavit* to any thing that is put into their mouths. Such alſo muſt needs be guilty, who ſwear *poſitively* to

a thing which they have received only upon report; let the Reporters be never so credible, and our belief never so ſtrong: yet all that we can ſafely atteſt, is only to the report, and not to the thing it ſelf; except we were eye, or ear-witneſſes of it: they alſo that will teſtify to the thing it ſelf, upon the preſumption of the moſt convincing circumſtances, cannot eſcape; becauſe it is poſſible the thing may not be for all.

3 When it is done *partially*. If men ſwear but one part of the Truth, and ſuppreſs another eſſential part of it, by reaſon whereof the matter under debate comes to be miſrepreſented, and injury is thereupon done unto the party concerned; this will fall under the ſin before us: ſuch was the Teſtimony of *Doeg* againſt the *Prieſts* telling what was againſt them, but not what was for them, on which account, *David* brands him for a *Lying Tongue*, *Pſal.* 52. 1. Or if men make additions, and foiſt in ſomething more than is true, put their own Commentaries into, and make them part of the Text; ſuch was their Teſtimony againſt Chriſt, *Mark* 14. 58. *We heard him ſay, that he would deſtroy this Temple that is made with hands.* Compare John 2. 19.

4. When men do it *trivially*. An Oath is a ſolemn thing, and requires a ſolemn occaſion;

ſion ; for men then to uſe it in their ordinary Communications, is a great breach of this Command : and to this is that expreſſion of our Saviour to be applied, in Mat. 5. 34. *But I ſay unto you, Swear not at all.* We are not to ſuppoſe that he wholly forbad the uſe of an Oath, when occaſion required it ; and Religion had from the beginning allowed it; but only that it ſhould not be uſed at all in common talk : they then that can hardly ſpeak a word without Swearing, as if it put a grace upon their Speech, muſt needs live in the practice of the ſin here forbidden ?

5. *When it is by* another name *than that of God, this is one thing that God ſeverely threatens them for,* Jer. 5. 7. How ſhall I pardon thee for this ? thy Children have forſaken me, and ſworn by them that are no Gods. *It is Gods Prerogative which he challengeth to himſelf, that no other Name be made uſe of in this* Solemnity *but his ; it is therefore an aſcribing of Divine Honour to any perſon or thing that we thus Invocate ; it is a puting of Gods Name upon it, which cannot be leſs than* Sacriledge : *hither belong thoſe words which ſome make uſe of as words of courſe,* Faith, Troth, Marry, *and many of like Import.*

2. *What Diſcovery there may be made of the greatneſs, or fearfulneſs of this Sin ?*

A. There hath bin enough ſaid to detect this,

this, in the very diſplay which hath bin made of the ſeveral particulars wherein men become Guilty of taking Gods name into their mouths, in vain, but for the farther clearing of it up, give me leave to ſubjoin theſe few Concluſions.

1. The Name of God is a *great* and a *fearful* Name, it muſt therefore be a very great Sin to offer any Affronts or Indignities unto it: we have theſe Epithets put upon it, *Deut.* 28. 58. *this glorious and fearful Name,* *THE LORD THY GOD.*

The greater and more eminent any perſon is, the more Criminal it is accounted by all men to be, to ſpeak any thing that is Indecent of him, that Derogates from his Honour and Credit: now there is none ſo great as God is, and for that reaſon, *his Name is above all Honour and Praiſe.* It is therefore ſaid to be *fearful*, becauſe the world ought to ſtand in aw of it, and be afraid to ſay or do any thing unworthy of it.

2 This ſin argues men to be *without the Fear of God*; for men to fall at any time into it, ſaith, that they did for the preſent lay it too much aſide; but if men live in the frequent practice of it, it gives a notorious character of a profane Spirit: All Religion is in Scripture frequently called, *The Fear of God,* becauſe without a deep impreſſion of it upon

upon the hearts of men, they cannot be Religious; wicked men are upon this account often called, such as *fear not God*: and the sins which they allow themselves in, is a witness of it in the Consciences of those that observe them: hence that, *Psal.* 36. 1. *The Transgression of the Wicked, saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.* Men must of necessity put away this Reverential Fear from them, before they can dare to allow themselves in this sin; for if they were under the aw of his Glorious Majesty, it would make them to reverence his Name, and tremble at the very thoughts of Taking it in Vain.

3. This sin carries in it a *grievous contempt* of God, men must of necessity first undervalue his Being, before they can profane his Name. There cannot possibly be a more manifest discovery made, that men have low and mean thoughts of God, than when they can play with and abuse his Name: if men did entertain the Psalmists opinion of him, *Psal.* 111. 9. *Holy and Reverend is his Name*; they could not thus do. And can it be supposed a little sin, to despise him, whose Honour and Glory is Great above all our conceptions.

4 It *Scandalizeth* the World. The very Light of Nature in the Consciences of meer Heathen

Heathen, teacheth men highly to venerate him, unto whom they give the acknowledgement of a Deity: the very Confessing of him to be God, carries in it the yeilding and beleiving him to deserve all Honour and Fear, and the want of it to be the Root of *Atheism*: God therefore pleads with his people about this, from Natural Principles, *Mal.* 3. 6. *The Son Honoreth his Father, &c.* q d. There is as much Convincing Reason that the Notion of a God should stir up Holy Fear in men as the notion of a Father should challenge Honour from a Child, and what will Atheistical Men say, when they see us live without it? what a God will they think men pretend to Worship, whom they can dare to offer such indignity unto? whose Name they can play withall, and trample upon at their pleasure? The Name of God will unavoidably *be evil spoken* of among profane men, *for the sake* of such as call themselves the People of God, and yet do allow themselves thus to do.

5. God stands particularly engaged to *vindicate* his Name upon such: If we think of the threatning with which this Command is guarded, it will certifie us how exceedingly provoking this sin is to God: when God saith that he is resolved that such as so do shall not escape unpunished, it tells us that he cannot

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bear it; he ſtands upon the Honour of his Name, and his Holineſs, whereby he is bound for his Glory, will not part with any of it, *Iſa.* 42. 8 and therefore we have that fearful Commination, againſt thoſe that lye under the Guilt of this Sin, *Mal.* 2. 2. and that Sin cannot be little, againſt which the Threatnings of the Word of God are ſo great.

Vſe 1. For *Humiliation*; the Conſideration of theſe things may well call us all into the Duſt, and lay us exceeding Low bfore God; great Sins call for deep Abaſements; and there are two reſpects in which the preſent conſideration offers us occaſion for being humbled.

1. *Have not the beſt of Gods People cauſe to abaſe themſelves before God, for their ſelf-neglect upon this account? Godlineſs indeed will teach thoſe in whom it is Implanted, not to drive a trade of committing this ſin, that cannot be* the ſpot of Gods Children; *but good men are in danger of being overtaken with it, and oftentimes they are overtaken with it, for want of looking to themſelves* leſt they offend with their tongues, *and therefore good men have been branded with them in Scripture; and that it may lay us low, let us Conſider,*

1. *That our Inadvertency herein will greatly* wound *our Profeſſion, it will do it both in the thoughts of good men, and of bad men; thoſe indeed will be grieved at us, whereas theſe will inſult over us; but to both it will render us juſtly ſuſpect-*

ed for want of Sincerity; it will give men just occaſion to make a doubt, whether we do really ſtand in thoſe Relations to God, which not only require, but will alſo enforce our honouring and fearing of him, and if our Names ſuffer upon the account, & men look upon us as no better than profane *ones, let us thank our ſelves, and remember, that we firſt made Gods Name to ſuffer by our irreverend taking it into our mouths.*

2. *It will alſo* wound *our* Conſciences, *however we may for the preſent ſtifle them, and keep them under Inſenſibleneſs of it, yet the wound is given to them, every time we dare thus to do; and there will be a time, ſooner or later, when God will ſo touch our Conſciences as to Awaken them, and make them ſorely to reflect upon us, and then the wound will ſmart and put us to grief, and if the Name of God be indeed precious unto us, it will be a very bitter thought, and coſt us many ſorrowful groans and tears.*

3. If we have been overtaken with this ſin, and be not deeply humbled for it, we cannot excuſe our ſelves from having an hand in procuring of the *Judgments* that are upon us, this is one of the ſins that brings them upon a people as ſoon as any: a ſin that God is not wont uſually to let go unpuniſhed in this world: and when Gods Hand is out upon a people, all that have this guilt on them, have reaſon to *ſmite upon their own breaſts*, and confeſs themſelves involved in the Indictment, & it ſhould

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be a very humbling thought upon the hearts of ſuch, who ought to have *ſtood in the Gap*, and kept off the Judgments of God, to think that inſtead of ſo doing, they have helpt to open the gap wider, & make the way larger for the breaking in of the Judgments of God.

2. Let it humble us for, & ſet us on mourning by reaſon of this ſin in others And alaſs! Is there not a tremendous deal of it to be obſerved? is there not enough in open view, to make us to wiſh with the Prophet, Jer. 9. 1. *Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears.* And to engage us herein let us conſider;

1. Doth not the *Land mourn* for this? is it not one, and not a little part neither of Gods Controverſy, which he is at this day managing with us, and for which he hath brought us under ſo many terrible effects of his Diſpleaſure. I am ſure God pointed his people of old, in a calamitous time, unto this, Jer 23. 10. *Becauſe of Swearing the Land mourneth.* Is it not a provoking thing to him, *who is jealous for his great Name*, to ſee that even in *N. E.* in a *Land of Uprightneſs*, a place of ſo eminent a Profeſſion, his Name ſhould be ſo lightly ſet by, and ſo wofully abuſed, that it ſhould be ſo pierced and ſhot through every day, with the Curſes and Oaths of ungodly men, and that it ſhould be ſo litle regarded by a great many that make

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more of a Profeſſion; if theſe things are ſo, we need not to be at a loſs in our enquiring *what is the meaning of this his ſo great anger*, the impreſſions whereof are upon us in ſo many terrible Providences? & when it is ſo, is it not high time for us to mourn over it bitterly?

2. Except we thus do, we ſhall alſo be found to be *guilty* of their ſins: God is pleaſed graciouſly to accept of the tears and ſorrows of theſe, tha can do no more for the prevention of ſin, who do lament & bitterly bewail it before him: (tho this will not be accounted to be enough in thoſe who have the opportunity to do more, & neglect it) but if we do not do thus much, we ſhall then be found, and declared guilty *of having fellowſhip with the unfruitful works of Darkneſs*, and be fellow-ſufferers with them, at leaſt in the outward Judgments of God, which he brings as a Teſtimony of his Diſpleaſure at theſe things. If then we do not mourn, how ſhall we expect to have the diſtinguiſhing *mark upon us*, which God appointed to be put upon thoſe in *Jeruſalem, who ſighed and mourned for all the abominations which were committed in the midſt of it?* Ezek. 9. 3.

Uſe. 2. For *Exhortation*: it calls upon us all to ſet our ſelves ſtrenuouſly againſt this Sin, if it be ſo grievous and provoking to God, and if there be ſo much of it to be found in the midſt of us, it then concerns every one to uſe our

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best Endeavours that it may be Reformed and prevented, that so the Anger of God be not yet more incensed against us, and his Judgements not only continue, but encrease amongst us: and for our Direction;

1. Let every one reform it in himself, by a careful avoiding of all manner of such *Communication*, as will be to the Prophanation of Gods Holy Name If we have been heretofore too forgetful of our selves in this regard, let it lay us low before God, and drive us to hearty Repentance, and Renewing our Peace; but for the time forward our business is to be more watchful over our selves than ever; and that we may do it to purpose, take these three Rules for help.

1. Keep up the *Fear* and *Reverence* of God in your hearts, be sure that it be there planted by or in a true work of *Conversion*, & then take care to keep it up in a vigorous disposition; if we do indeed maintain this inward respect to him which is his due, it will be of great efficacy to curb in the exorbitancy of our tongues; our Saviour Christ hath taught us, *that out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh*, so that if we can keep irreverence from our hearts, our tongues will not be in danger of being influenced from thence: the best cure and preventive of this sin is prescribed to us in the Prophet, Isa. 8 13. *Sanctify the Lord of Hosts himself, and let him be your*

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fear, and your dread; and for this end, be frequently thinking what a God he is: meditate much, *how great, how mighty, how holy, how just, how Omniſcient he is*, and argue from thence how *fearful a thing* it muſt be to *fall into his revenging hand*, which all they muſt expect to do, who preſume to pollute his Name with their defiled Lips.

2. Endeavour to *expreſs* this *Reverence* in all your *Communication*, let it influence every word you ſpeak; remember, your Lips are your *glory*, your *tongues* were given you to *honour* God withal; & that is done by *pure* & *undefiled* language: if we did more accuſtome our ſelves to clean expreſſions, this would be ſo pleaſant, and ſo comfortable, to what the other foul and dirty converſe is, that it would make that hateful to us, and by that means break us off from it.

3. Beware of *unruly Paſſions*: the Tongue in man is a moſt ready and apt Inſtrument for the affections to diſcover themſelves by; and hence theſe are the times when men are wont to allow themſelves the greateſt Liberty, when theſe are tranſported: when the paſſions have gotten the Reins in their Necks, and the Curb looſened, they hurry men into ſtrange Exorbitancies; and now *their Tongues are their own, and who ſhall rule over them*? now neither God nor man are regarded; but whatſoever an enraged affection ſuggeſts; all ſhall come out

that lies next. When did that man *blaſpheme the Name of God*, and curſe, but when he was engaged in a quarrel? Lev. 24.10,11. When was it that *Peter* fell to curſing, but when he was afraid of ſuffering for Chriſt, & thought himſelf expoſed? *Mark* 14. 71. when was it that *David* imprecated, but when he was enraged at *Nabal*; 1 *Sam.* 25. 21, 22. if we could always keep our ſelves in a quiet and compoſed frame, we ſhould be the leſs expoſed to the danger of this ſin.

2. Let us reform it as much as we can in others. This is a duty which we ow to all our *Neighbours*, even all mankind, as there is occaſion; by bearing ſome due teſtimony againſt it, whenever we hear it: either by reproving of it, or, if that will not obtain, by making complaint of ſuch to thoſe who have power to puniſh it; they therefore are charged with *ſin, who hear the voice of Swearing, and do not utter it*, Lev. 5.1. we ought alſo to ſet before all men a contrary example, and let them ſee, in all our demeanour, what an high reſpect we bear to Gods precious Name: But it is alſo one ſpecial thing, which all *Superiours* ought to be exceeding careful about, in reſpect of thoſe that are under their Charge: It highly concerns *Magiſtrates* in their place, to ſuppreſs it; *Miniſters* in their places to give in their ſolemn Teſtimony frequently againſt it; *Churches* not to tollerate it in thoſe that are

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in their Communion, and there is a very great duty in this respect lying on *Parents, and Governours of Families*: and let me a little Expostulate with such: what I pray, is the Reason, why there is hardly any passing the streets, where many young ones are gotten together, but we may hear Children that cannot speak plain, who have learnt to Lisp and stammer out Prophaneſs, and take Gods Name in vain, by Irreverend Exclamations, possibly, yea too often, by Oaths and Cursings? it is to be feared of too many, that they have learnt it of their Parents and of others that they are at least suffered in it, without a due Testimony born against it yea do not some make a sport of it; as if it were pretty and becoming to have a Child stammer at Prophaneneſs? well! let all such Parents know, that if they do not take more care to suppreſs this Sin, and use a greater inspection over, and severity against them for it; God will neither let Parents nor Children stand Guiltleſs, but will make them Example of his furious Revenges; let us then take this Warning, and *Trembie at his Word*, that so we may not feel the Weight of his Hand.

FINIS.